

SYSTEM FOR MODIFYING AND TARGETING ADVERTISING

CONTENT OF INTERNET RADIO BROADCASTS

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

5 This application claims the benefit of United States Provisional Patent Application No. 60/119,443, filed February 10, 1999 entitled "System For Modifying And Targeting Advertising Content of Internet Radio Broadcasts".

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 **1. Field of the Invention:**

The present invention relates to a method for substituting replacement commercial advertisements in place of original broadcast commercials for radio programs broadcast via the Internet.

2. Description of the Prior Art

15 Advertising is the primary mechanism by which producers of products and services capture the attention of potential consumers. In today's global marketplace of chaos and dislocation, the need for advertising has never been greater. Traditionally, mass advertising occurs by way of mass distribution through television, radio, newspapers and the like. Usually, advertisers prescribe the media content and pay for the mass distribution thereof.

20 In some instances, the consumer subsumes a portion of the costs of the advertisements, as for example, by paying for a newspaper subscription. The advent of computer-driven technology, and especially the Internet, has rendered traditional advertising methods obsolete.

The Internet is a system of linked computers that provides for global information exchange and includes innumerable sites, each of which presents advertising, research and other information about a particular organization. Many organizations now rely on the Internet to obtain and transmit crucial and, oftentimes, sensitive information. Thus, the Internet has quickly become one of the most effective means by which an organization can globally advertise its goods and services.

It is now possible to listen to radio programs with a personal computer or other device capable of receiving audio data via the Internet. This is because it is becoming common for a regular broadcast radio station to make their programs available via the Internet. Internet radio programs originate from many different regions of the world. As a result, they are frequently sprinkled with commercial advertisements that are targeted to the region from which the program originated. A commercial for an automobile dealer in Lisbon is of little value to an Internet listener in Philadelphia. On the other hand, an Internet Hosting Service providing radio station content to the listener would benefit by substituting commercials of advertisers interested in reaching such listeners. The original commercials provide no benefit to the original radio station or advertisers, nor to the listener, nor are they a source of revenue for a business organization such as an Internet Hosting Service which presents radio stations on the Internet.

There remains a need in the art for an effective way to substitute replacement commercials for original broadcast commercials in radio programs transmitted via the Internet.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with the present invention, there is provided a method for substituting replacement commercial advertisements in place of original broadcast

commercials for radio programs broadcast via the Internet. Generally stated, the method enables (a) generating a plurality of replacement radio commercials of various predetermined time lengths, whereby each replacement radio commercial has an associated time length; (b) digitizing the replacement radio commercials and the associated time lengths; (c) storing in an array the digitized replacement radio commercials and the associated time lengths, the array being stored by an Internet Hosting Service; (d) marking each of the broadcast radio commercials with a digital marker by the radio station, the digital marker indicating the start and duration time of the broadcast radio commercial within the Internet radio program; (e) transmitting the marked Internet radio program to the Internet Hosting Service; (f) receiving of the marked Internet radio program by the Internet Hosting Service; (g) detecting a digital marker of a commercial on the received Internet radio program; (h) reading the duration time of the received commercial from the detected digital marker; (i) comparing the read duration time with the associated time lengths stored in the array; (j) selecting from the array a digitized replacement radio commercial having an associated time length equal to the read duration time; (k) substituting the selected digitized replacement radio commercial in place of the broadcast commercial; and (l) repeating steps (g) through (k) until the end of the Internet radio program, whereby the listener of the Internet radio program receives an edited program having one or more replacement radio commercials substituted in place of the broadcast radio commercials.

Further, the invention provides a system for substituting broadcast commercials of an Internet radio program, with replacement commercials, comprising: (a) radio station means for marking the broadcast commercials of the Internet radio program

with a mark, the mark indicating the start and time duration of the broadcast commercial; (b) input computer server means of an Internet Hosting Service for receiving the marked Internet radio program; (c) commercial storage means for storing a plurality of digitized replacement audio commercials; (d) central processor
5 means for selecting one of the digitized replacement audio commercials from the commercial storage means; (e) marker decoder means for decoding the mark, the mark being supplied to the central processor; (f) digital audio processor means for generating an edited radio program by substituting the selected digitized replacement audio commercial in place of the broadcast commercial; and (g) output
10 computer server means for transmitting the edited radio program to a user.

Optionally, the invention provides a system wherein the commercial storage means further stores commercial type and a user profile storage means stores individual user ID and user demographics, whereby the central processor employs the user ID to match the user demographics to the commercial type for selecting a
15 commercial targeted to the user.

Also optionally, as the audio content emanating from the radio station is digitized, it is placed into data packets each bearing a sequential serial number. The digitizing mark that is created to identify the presence of a commercial is embedded with the serial numbers of the audio packets constituting the beginning
20 and the duration of the commercial. The Internet Hosting Service, upon receiving the audio stream from the radio station in serialized packet format, along with the marking information stream containing the serial numbers of the packets containing audio commercials, can precisely remove the audio broadcast commercial and

substitute it with a replacement commercial with no audible artifacts suggesting to the listener that such replacement has taken place.

Conveniently, a large percentage of radio stations utilize a computer system rather than tapes or CD's for the origination of the majority of their audio content, including music and commercials. Such systems, referred to generally as "broadcast automation systems" or "live assist systems" actually play the audio for the music or the commercial. A broadcast automation system maintains a listing of all audio events that the station plans to broadcast, including critical information of each event such as event type and duration. It can signal the precise beginning and ending of each event, and can transmit the identifying data associated with each event to an external system such as an Internet Hosting Service. Broadcast automation systems, having the capabilities listed above, facilitate the implementation of advertising replacements as described herein.

Advantageously, the method of the present invention permits an Internet Hosting Service to substitute local advertisements in place of originally broadcast advertisements in radio programs broadcast via the Internet. The invention enables the Internet Hosting Service to generate additional revenues and to target advertisements to its customers. Customers are provided with increased opportunity to receive information concerning services or products more attuned to their needs.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention will be more fully understood and further advantages will become apparent when reference is made to the following detailed description and the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a block diagram representing the modification of advertisements during the flow of an Internet radio program from the program originator to the listener;

FIG. 2 schematically depicts a radio program segment containing commercials and marker; and

5 **FIG. 3** is a block diagram of a system for substituting local radio commercials in place of broadcast Internet radio commercials.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

10 In accordance with the present invention, there is provided a method for substituting replacement commercial advertisements in place of original broadcast commercials for radio programs broadcast via the Internet. Internet radio programs originate from many different regions of the world. As a result, they are frequently sprinkled with commercial advertisements that are targeted to the region from which the program originated. A commercial for an automobile dealer in Lisbon is of little value to an
15 Internet listener in Philadelphia. On the other hand, an Internet Hosting Service providing Internet radio station access to the listener would benefit by substituting commercials of advertisers interested in reaching such listeners.

The invention provides a method for substituting replacement radio commercials in place of broadcast radio commercials by an Internet Hosting
20 Service. In practice, each commercial is marked by the radio station with a digital marker that indicates the start and length of each commercial in the program broadcast. When the program is received by the Internet Hosting Service, each commercial is identified by its marker and a replacement commercial of the appropriate length is selected from a list of commercials kept by the Internet

Hosting Service and substituted in place of the original commercial. The Internet Hosting Service may be any type of service which has the ability to receive communications from a radio station. That is to say, the Internet Hosting Service may be a private communications entity, a broadcasting network data center, a service provider or the like. In one embodiment, the Internet Hosting Service may
5 comprise the same entity as an Internet service provider.

As illustrated by Figs.1 and 2 of the drawings, marked Internet radio programs 12 from a plurality of program originators 10 are sent to hosting service 13 via the Internet. The arrows in Fig. 1 indicate transfers, including Internet
10 transfers. These Internet radio programs have broadcast radio commercials as part of their content. Ad marking systems 11, which may be broadcast automation systems of the radio stations, introduce digital markings to accompany the audio content indicating the beginning and duration of audio ads in the audio stream. Further, ad marking systems 11 may digitize the radio station audio content into
15 packets bearing sequential serial numbers, and the digital markings which indicate the beginning and end of audio ads may relate such beginnings and endings to audio packet serial numbers. Hosting service 13 receives the marked audio stream wherein the audio may be music interleaved with commercials, and the markings may be digital data packets indicating the beginning and ending of commercials
20 within that audio stream. Hosting service 13 maintains a database of replacement audio ads 14 encompassing the ads and associated data describing each ad such as duration and the desired user demographics that the advertiser would like to reach. Hosting service 13 replaces audio ads emanating from the radio station program originator 10 with replacement ads of equivalent duration drawn from replacement

ad database 14, in the process creating an edited Internet radio program 16. The resolution of the Ad Marking System 11 in digitizing the audio stream into serialized packets enables the creation of edited Internet radio programs 16 which are absent of audible artifacts to indicate that ad substitution has taken place.

5 Edited Internet radio programs 16 are delivered to listeners 19 via the Internet Service Providers 17 which provide Internet access to the listeners 19. Listeners 19 listen to the Internet radio stations from program originators 10, hearing different ads from those who might contemporaneously listen to the radio station's over-the-air broadcast with a conventional radio. Optionally, the hosting service 13 may
10 examine the desired user demographics associated with replacement ads 14 and match them against the user demographic database 15 comprised of demographic information about listeners 19. If listeners 19 have differing demographics, the edited Internet radio programs 16 may be unique for each demographic type of listener 19 who may be listening to the same Internet radio station. That is, males
15 listening to Internet radio station WXYZ may receive a different edited Internet radio program 16 from females listening to the same station.

The method for substituting replacement radio commercials in place of a plurality of broadcast radio commercials on an Internet radio program transmitted by a hosting service 13 to a listener 19 via an Internet service provider 17
20 comprises the steps of: (a) generating a plurality of replacement radio commercials of various predetermined time lengths, whereby each replacement radio commercial has an associated time length; (b) digitizing the replacement radio commercials and the associated time lengths; (c) storing in an array the digitized replacement radio commercials and the associated time lengths, the array being stored by the Internet

Hosting Service 13; (d) marking each of the broadcast radio commercials with a digital marker by the ad marking system 11, the digital marker indicating the start and duration time of the broadcast radio commercial within the Internet radio program 12; (e) transmitting the marked Internet radio program 12 to the Internet

5 Hosting Service 13; (f) receiving the marked Internet radio program 12 by the Internet Hosting Service 13; (g) examining the marked Internet radio program 12 by the Internet Hosting Service 13; (h) detecting a digital marker of a commercial on the marked Internet radio program 12; (i) reading the duration time of the commercial from the detected digital marker; (j) comparing the read duration time

10 with the associated time lengths stored in the array; (k) selecting from the array a digitized replacement radio commercial having an associated time length equal to the read duration time; (l) substituting the selected digitized replacement radio commercial in place of the commercial; and (m) repeating steps (h) through (l) until the end of the Internet radio program.

15 A segment of Internet radio program 20 starts at 21 and ends at 29. Segment 20 is comprised of program elements 22 and commercials 24, 26, 28 of differing time durations. The hosting service 13 or the program originator 10 is provided with a means for marking the beginning of each commercial with marker 31. Marker 31 comprises a start indicator and a time duration of commercials 24, 26

20 and 28. The marking means can take any number of methods known in the art, such as putting a digital pulse-modulated inaudible tone on a subcarrier of the audio wave. Alternatively, marking the start and time duration of the commercial is accomplished by adding a digital marker information packet to the audio data stream.

Fig. 3 illustrates the system used by Internet Hosting Service 13 for reading marked Internet radio program 12 received from program originator 10. Internet Hosting Service 13 maintains commercial storage means 14. Commercial storage means 14 comprises a database of digitized radio commercials of various predetermined time lengths along with each commercial's time length. Commercial storage means 14 is used to supply an appropriate duration commercial on demand. Preferably, Internet Hosting Service 13 also maintains user profile array 15. This array comprises user ID and demographic information, whereby the demographic information may be used to target specific commercials to specific users.

Advantageously, the method of the present invention permits an Internet Hosting Service to substitute replacement advertisements in place of originally broadcast advertisements in radio programs broadcast via the Internet. The invention enables the Internet Hosting Service to generate additional revenues and to target advertisements to its customers.

In practice, radio station program originator 10 sends broadcast audio to a marking system 11, and then transmits marked Internet radio program 12 via the Internet to Internet Hosting Service input server 40 of Internet Hosting Service 13. Marked Internet radio program is sent as data stream 12a to marker decoder 48. Marker decoder 48 reads marker 31 and decodes time duration 32. Internet radio program data stream 12b and time duration 32 are passed to central processor 46. Central processor 46 uses time duration 32 to find an equal length substitute commercial from commercial storage means 14. The selected commercial is returned to central processor 46 as replacement commercial audio stream 38. Central processor 46 substitutes replacement commercial audio stream 38 for the

original commercial resulting in edited program 16. Edited program 16 is passed to Internet Hosting Service output server 52 and then sent via Internet through the Internet Service Provider 17 to the user, listener 19.

Optionally, the system further comprises user profile storage means 15, where demographics of each user are stored along with the user's ID number. User ID 35, obtained from output server 52, is also passed to central processor 46 and to user profile storage means 15. In this manner, the system is provided with means for selecting a commercial targeted for a specific user or type of user.

The invention provides a system for substituting broadcast commercials of an Internet radio program, with replacement commercials, comprising: (a) radio station means for marking the broadcast commercials of the Internet radio program with a mark, the mark indicating the start and time duration of the broadcast commercial; (b) input server means for receiving the marked Internet radio program; (c) commercial storage means for storing a plurality of digitized radio commercials; (d) central processor means for selecting one of the digitized radio commercials from the commercial storage means; (e) marker decoder means for decoding the mark, the mark being supplied to the central processor; (f) central processor mixing means for generating an edited radio program by substituting the selected digitized radio commercial in place of the broadcast commercial; and (g) output server for transmitting the edited radio program to a user.

Optionally, the invention provides a system wherein the commercial storage means further stores commercial type and a user profile storage means stores individual user ID and user demographics, whereby the central processor employs

the user ID to match the user demographics to the commercial type for selecting a commercial targeted for a specific user or type of user.

Having thus described the invention in rather full detail, it will be understood that such detail need not be strictly adhered to but that various changes and modifications may suggest themselves to one skilled in the art, all falling within the scope of the present invention as defined by subjoined claims.